**Questions to Illicit Close Reading of “I Know Why the Caged Bird Cannot Read”**

Use a colored pen/highlighter to annotate your copy of the essay. Use these questions to guide your annotations.

1. Find at least 3 appeals to ethos in this essay. What different roles, or personae, does Prose use to establish her ethos?
2. Prose’s opening paragraph includes such words as appalled, dismal, and dreariness- all with negative connotations. Why does she start out with such strong language? Does she risk putting off readers who do not share her views? What other examples of strongly emotional language do you find in the essay?
3. Prose makes several key assumptions about the role and impact of reading literary works in high school. What are they?
4. What appeals does she make to logos?
5. Prose cites many different novels and plays. Does she assume her audience is familiar with some of them? All of them? Why does it matter whether the audience knows the works?
6. According to Prose, “To hold up [*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*] as a paradigm of memoir, of thought- of literature- is akin to inviting doctors convicted of malpractice to instruct our medical students” (para. 13). Do you agree with this analogy? What other examples of figurative language can you find in this essay?
7. Towards the end of the essay (paras. 35, 39, and 43), Prose uses a series of rhetorical questions. What is her purpose in piling one rhetorical question on top of the other?
8. According to Prose, why are American high school students learning to loathe literature? Try to find at least four or five reasons.